LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

European Directive Relating to Personal Protective Equipment

An overview of relevant directives

EC Directives relating to Personal Protective Equipment

There are two main Directives relating to Personal Protective Equipment(PPE) including Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE):

- **Dir. 89/686/EEC** - the Harmonisation of PPE Laws
- **Dir. 89/656/EEC** - Use of PPE in the Workplace

Directive 89/686/EEC details :

1. The Basic Safety Requirements that a product must satisfy
2. The conditions for placing PPE on the market and for the free movement of goods within the EU including :

- Routes to Certification
- EC type examination
- CE Marking

The directive 89/686/EEC divides all PPE into three different categories according to the degree of risk. The higher the risk the PPE protects against the more stringent the certification procedure.

Category I

This is all PPE protecting against minimal risks, where the user can assess the level of protection needed, or where the effects are gradual and can be safetly identified by the user in good time.

Certification Procedure Category I

The manufacturer has to assemble the technical documentation so that this can, if necessary, be submitted to the competent authorities. Basically the manufacturer Self Certifies the product.

Product is marked **CE**

Category II

This is PPE protecting against normal risk, categorised as head, face, hearing, eye protectors, garments, shoes & gloves.

Certification Procedure Category II

The manufacturer submits a model of the PPE device for EC type examination together with all relevant technical documentation to an independent approved inspection body,* who establishes & certifies that the PPE model in question satisfies the relevant provisions of the Directive.

Product is marked **CE**

Category III

This is all PPE intended to protect against mortal danger or against dangers which may seriously & irreversibly damage health, or where the effects cannot be identified in sufficient time. e.g. respirators, fall arrest equipment.

Certification Procedure Category III

The manufacturer submits a model of the PPE device for EC type examination together with all relevant technical documentation to an independent approved inspection body*, who establishes & certifies that the PPE model in question satisfies the relevant provisions of the Directive. Additionally the manufacturer must ensure that the manufacturing process results in homogeneity of production and that product is in conformity with the model which has been assessed and approved.

This second step can be achieved in one of two ways:

- EC quality control system for the final product with annual re-examination by the approved inspection body
- A system for ensuring EC quality of production by means of monitoring, usually by adopting a recognised quality system such as ISO 9002.

Product is marked **CE XXXX**

Where XXXX is the identification number of the approved body involved in the quality surveillance system. (* Independent approved inspection bodies are appointed by the European Commission and are subject to ongoing monitoring)

Once a manufacturer has obtained EC type approval for a product he draws up a Declaration of Conformity for that product and he can affix the CE mark to product and /or packaging. EC type examination certificates are not time limited, a manufacturer will only re-certify a product if there is significant change to the construction of the product, to the claims made for the product or possibly if the manufacturing process changes significantly.

Summary:

Directive 89/686/EEC harmonises the conditions to commercialise Personal Protective Equipment and its free movement within the EU. CE marking is evidence of conformity with the Directive.

Dir. 89/656/EEC - Use of PPE in the Workplace

This Directive is concerned with the proper use of PPE and its role in improving standards of Health & Safety in the workplace. Where PPE is defined as being "all equipment designed to be worn or held by the worker to protect him/her against one or more hazards likely to endanger safety & health at work."

The Directive goes on to re-state the philosophy that, where risks to health & safety can be identified, the first priority should be to eliminate the risk by finding safer alternatives, changing work practice or providing collective protection. PPE should only be considered when it is not possible to achieve the required degree of protection by any of these methods or as part of collective protection.

The Directive specifies :

- that all PPE must comply with relevant EEC standards, such as Directive 89/686/EEC.
- all PPE provided must be suitable for the wearer and the task .
- if more than one item of PPE is to be used the items must be compatible
- where feasible PPE should be issued on a personal basis
- all PPE must be used only for the purpose intended and in accordance with manufacturers instructions.

The Directive further places obligations on employers to:

- ensure all PPE in their workplace conforms to relevant EC standards
- conduct a risk assessment of the hazards
- define the characteristics of equipment necessary to protect employees
- keep records of assessments and reasons for selecting particular types of PPE.

Finally, the Directive requires Member States to ensure that there are general rules for use of PPE and/or regulations to cover situations where PPE is mandatory.

For more details on either of these Directives contact your National Ministry of Trade or the European Commission Information Service.

3M Safety Solutions

3M United Kingdom
3M Centre
Cain Road, Bracknell
Berkshire RG12 8HT
Tel: 0870 60 800 60
www.3M.co.uk/ohes

3M Ireland Limited
The Iveagh Building
The Park,
Dublin 18
Tel: 1 800 320 500